

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8635

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1486

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE, SY, EG

SUBJ: EGYPTIAN CROSS CURRENTS IN LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 1865; CAIRO 1959

1. IN THE WAKE OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE SYRIA'S SUCCESS IN COMPLETING THE FIRST PHASE OF PUTTING LEBANON BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, WE ARE CONCERNED BY THE ACCELERATED EGYPTIAN PRESS ATTACKS AGAINST SYRIA, WHICH HAVE ADDED REINFORCEMENT TO PARALLEL IRAQI ATTACKS.

2. ADMITTEDLY, WITHIN CERTAIN BOUNDS, PROGAGANDA WARFARE IS INEVITABLE AND IS OF COURSE FAR FROM BEING ONE-SIDED. YET THE SYRIAN ENDEAVOR TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS, UNIQUE AS IT WAS (WE ARE CONVINCED THAT SYRIA ACCOMPLISHED WHAT NO ONE ELSE COULD HAVE
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ACCOMPLISHED, LEAST OF ALL THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES) IS

A FRAGILE AFFAIR THAT IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED OF FINAL SUCCESS. THUS, AVOIDANCE OF ANY UNNECESSARY CROSS CURRENTS IS OBVIOUSLY DESIRABLE EVEN IF EGYPT DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES IN LEBANON THAT IT ONCE HAD.

3. IN LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, WE WONDER IF IT WOULD NOT BE IN OUR INTEREST TO MAKE A DISCREET APPROACH (ONCE MORE?) TO THE EGYPTIANS TO COUNSEL MODERATION ON THE BASIS OF A REASSESSMENT OF THEIR OWN INTEREST. WE WLSO WONDER WHETHER IT WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE TO SUPPLEMENT THIS APPROACH WITH A REQUEST TO THE SAUDIS TO DO LIKEWISE. FORTUNATELY THE SAUDIS SEEM TO HAVE GRASPED THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND HAVE ALLOWED THE SYRIANS AT LEAST A BREATHING SPELL. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT, AT SYRIA'S REQUEST, THE SAUDIS MAY HAVE EVEN APPROACHED THE SHAH FOR THE PURPOSE OF HAVING IRAN EXERCISE A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON THE IRAQIS.)

4. WE ARE AWARE THAT THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME WE EXPRESS OUR CONCERN ABOUT THIS MATTER, AND THAT SENSITIVE BILATERAL ISSUES MAY BE INVOLVED, BUT IT IS A CONTINUING PROBLEM WHICH CAN AFFECT ARAB-ISRAEL RELATIONS IN WAYS WHICH THE EGYPTIANS SHOULD NOT DESIRE FROM POINT OF VIEW OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS AS WELL AS OURS.

LAMBRAKIS

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